



DC COMMISSION ON THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

**FULL COMMISSION MEETING  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2009**

**3:00 – 6:00 PM**

**GREATER WASHINGTON URBAN LEAGUE BOARDROOM**

Commissioners

Anne Ashmore-Hudson, Chair  
Rhona Wolfe Freidman, Vice Chair  
Marvin Bowser  
Christopher Cowan  
Rebecca Fishman  
Philippa Hughes  
Bernard Richardson  
Michael R. Sonnenreich  
Judith F. Terra  
Lavinia Wohlfarth

Staff

Gloria Nauden, Executive Director  
Dolores Kendrick, Poet Laureate  
Catherine Cleary, Dir. Grants & Leg. Affairs  
Moshe Adams, Legislative & Grants Manager  
Ebony Blanks, Program Coordinator  
Rachel Dickerson, Public Art Manager

I. Call to Order:

The Chair, Dr. Anne Ashmore-Hudson, called the meeting to order at 3:14.

II. Approval of Minutes:

It was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Terra to approve the minutes from the October meeting as presented.

\*Motion Carried

\*Unanimous

III. Executive Director's Report:

The Executive Director highlighted the upcoming Art Salon, which will begin right after the meeting, and noted the most recent *ArtNews*, featuring Sam Gilliam. She also commented on the completion of the 14<sup>th</sup> and Girard Street mural, which was a timely opportunity for the community to come together following the fatal shooting of a nine-year-old boy in the neighborhood.

The Executive Director reminded the Commission about the input session scheduled for Monday, November 23, to respond to the AMS's recommendations for the Agency's next strategic plan. She also highlighted the upcoming census in the District and asked that the commissioners reach out to their constituents to drive up the respondent rate.

The Executive Director further noted the upcoming grant panels and the application statistics, adding that DCCAH may be highlighted in an upcoming issue of the *Washington Post* in an article about stimulus funds. DCCAH was also recently highlighted in the *Washington Business Journal* for the Windows into DC project.

#### IV. Chair's Report:

The Chair reported on the most recent Art Salon at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, noting that it was very creatively put together and got an extraordinary response in the community. The Executive Director added that the Meridian International Center will donate its space to host a Thanksgiving dinner for 43 youth who stay at the Sasha Bruce House. The event will pair artists with young people for one-on-one conversations and arts engagement.

The Chair also mentioned her attendance at a recent fundraising dinner for the DC Jazz Festival. The Vice Chair reported on her attendance at the FotoWeekDC opening and noted that signage for the Commission was prominently displayed.

The Chair and the Executive Director recently met with representatives of the National Endowment for the Arts to identify additional funding sources for the Commission. The Chair also met with Commissioners Hughes and Clampitt to identify some special projects that are on the horizon. Commissioner Hughes will lead a guided tour of public art in the District and work to identify some additional locations where a public art installation could have a strong impact.

The Chair reminded the Commission about the arts' power to be transformational—the Art Salon events are good examples of an opportunity for all kinds of groups to come together, and the dinner for Sasha Bruce House demonstrates how healing the arts can be. The arts bring people around something that they can all connect to.

#### V. Poet Laureate's Report:

The Poet Laureate is currently working on a compendium of the speeches from the celebration of her tenth anniversary as the District's Poet Laureate. She noted an invitation she received to read at the Hillcrest Community Civic Association—it was a wonderful event and she was grateful to have received a watch as recognition of her contribution. She was also invited by a Girl Scout Troop in Howard County to speak with the girls as a role model and they were absolutely amazing—they asked incisive questions and showed a fine understanding of admirable women in history, such as Sojourner Truth and Amelia Earhart. She noted that she has written a poem in response to a flock of ducks that she saw while driving through Maryland to the event and she would be happy to distribute copies. She will also visit the Haynes School in January in support of their production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The Poet Laureate's Black History Month programming will take place at the GALA Hispanic

Theater and will include several poets; she noted that she would like to add some actors to the programming.

#### VI. Small Projects Program—For a Vote:

The program coordinator, Ebony Blanks, introduced the panel representative, Francesca Scott, who presented the panel's funding and policy recommendations.

1. The panel recommended developing a plan to work with applicants whose first language is not English.
2. The panel recommended mandating that all sections of each application be typed.
3. The panel recommended enforcing that the work sample reflect the type of project for which the funding is sought.

Ms. Scott commented that the panel was very exciting and as an artist she derived inspiration from the process.

#### Discussion:

Commissioner Cowan asked why so much money was left on the table and Ms. Blanks clarified that there are multiple deadlines throughout the year so funds needed to be retained. Commissioner Friedman asked, if the panel had had more money, where they would have set a cut-off point and Ms. Scott replied that the panel initially wanted to award funding to all applicants who received an average score of at least a 77.

It was moved by Commissioner Friedman that the Commission identify additional funding that can be allocated to this program to award funding to all applicants who received a score of at least 77. The Chair commented that the Commission should approve the recommendation first and the motion can be re-visited during the policy conversation.

#### Conclusion:

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Mpulubusi that the funding recommendations, allocating \$16,000 in funding, be approved as presented.

\*Motion Carried

Unanimous

#### VII. Cultural Facilities Program—For a Vote:

Rachel Dickerson, the Public Art Manager, introduced Laura Brower, the panel representative, who presented the panel's funding and policy recommendations.

1. Require applicant to request three (3) bids and supply the Arts Commission with the winning bid and the rationale behind selecting the subcontractor.

2. Clarify the difference between the organizations activities and planned activities for the grant period.
3. Clarify in application materials that a humanities based organization can be funded.
4. Applicant needs to demonstrate that they have the capability or management to oversee the work needed to be done.
5. Encourage applicant to think about completing a strategic plan for maintenance of the facility (ies).
6. Change the funding criteria so that artistic merit and community outreach have more equitable weighting.

She opined the need to encourage humanities and cultural institutions to apply instead of just arts organizations. She enjoyed serving on the panel.

Discussion:

Commissioner Sonnenreich commented that the weighting of the evaluation criteria in each of the grant programs may need to be re-visited. The Chair commented that the formula should not be the same in each grant program—there may be instances in which the service provided by the applicant should outweigh the quality of the artistic work. Commissioner Wohlfarth reminded the commissioners that we need to bear in mind the value of receiving any funds/all funds/no funds.

Commissioner Fishman commented that the panel should try to include more constructive feedback than “the application was not well written” so that the applicant can identify places to strengthen future applications. Commissioner Sonnenreich added that the panel process may need to be re-evaluated so that excellence is awarded—it seems that the process is too inclusive and projects of questionable merit are funded.

Commissioner Friedman asked that a new panel review committee be established. A sign up sheet will be presented.

Conclusion:

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Friedman to approve the funding recommendations, awarding \$492,588.00, as presented.

\*Motion Carried

Unanimous

VIII. Policy Recommendations—For a Vote:

The Executive Director and Catherine Cleary, Director of Grants and Legislative Affairs, presented the policy recommendations.

**A. Current Policy:** All service organizations are strictly prohibited from applying to any DCCAH grant program.

**Recommendation:** Arts service organizations should be eligible to apply for relevant, existing DCCAH grant programs.

Discussion

Commissioner Cowan asked for clarity on the impact of recommendation and it was clarified that all of the grant programs would be opened up to the service organizations. Commissioner Sonnenreich commented that awarding these funds would just add another layer of administrative expenses and the grants would be awarded at the expense of applicants who actually produce art. Commissioner Cowan added that it seemed to stray from the mission of the Agency. Commissioner Mpulubusi commented that the Commission seems to already be supporting these organizations through our partnerships and they do not need additional funding from the Commission. Commissioner Sonnenreich added that public money should not be used to support services that are offered pro-bono to the artists and other beneficiaries. The Chair reminded the commissioners that the recommendation does not have to do with partnerships but rather with service organizations. Commissioner Mpulubusi noted that if more funds are taken from artists, there will be no one for these organizations to serve anyway—the support should go to the artists themselves. Commissioner Cowan commented that pulling the funding from one partnership would double the number of grants that could have been issued through the SPP.

Conclusion:

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Mpulubusi and seconded by Commissioner Sonnenreich to maintain the current policy.

\*Motion Carried

Unanimous

**B. Current Policy:** DCCAH does not impose a limit on the percentage of a grant that may offset administrative costs associated with a project.

**Recommendation:** DCCAH should establish the maximum percentage of a grant award that may be used for administrative costs.

Commissioner Fishman asked what motivated the recommendation and Commissioner Friedman replied that the Arts Education Projects panel had a large problem with the administrative costs in the presented project budgets. Commissioner Mpulubusi commented that applying this to some program structures would result in staff not getting paid. Commissioner Bowser added that this would need to be implemented on a program-by-program basis and the Chair added that this would be a matter for new policy and procedure sub-committee.

Conclusion:

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Fishman that the policy and procedure sub-committee establish a fixed administrative rate on a program-by-program basis.

\*Motion Carried

Unanimous

**C. Current Policy (Both Categories):** One application form is used for both categories, with the only difference being the mandatory budget form.

**Recommendation:** There should be separate application forms for the two categories.

Commissioner Bowser articulated the differences between the two categories and supported the recommendation to create two different applications. He added the recommendation that funding availability for the two categories should be established separately, rather than as a lump sum for the entire grant program.

Conclusion:

Following discussion, it was moved by Commissioner Bowser and seconded by Commissioner Mpulubusi to accept the policy recommendation.

\*Motion Carried

Unanimous

It was moved by Commissioner Bowser and seconded by Commissioner Terra that the funding pools be established separately.

\*Motion Carried

Unanimous

**D. Current Policy (Project-Based Category):** Applicants must be located in ward 7 or ward 8, but the applications are evaluated on the project's impact on the community as a whole.

**Recommendation:** Applications to this category should be evaluated on their level of impact on the community as a whole and specifically in wards 7 and 8.

Commissioner Bowser stated that it is not clear enough what the "community" is—it needs to be clearly defined what the benefit for wards 7 and 8 is.

It was decided that this was an administrative issue and the staff would implement any necessary changes.

**E. Current Policy:** The level of each applicant's operating budget is not taken into consideration when evaluating the applications or allocating funds.

**Recommendation:** The applications should be divided into groups based on the applicants' annual operating budgets.

Commissioner Friedman noted that this issue spreads across all of the grant programs, not just Grants-in-Aid. The Executive Director detailed the breakdown of the funding that was awarded through Grants-in-Aid this year and noted that there seems to be a

natural breakdown of funding across organizations with various budget sizes. Commissioner Bowser noted that this speaks to the earlier question of what the guiding principle of the Agency is—quality or inclusiveness. He added that the recommendation is not a complete thought—it is not clear what the point of dividing the applicants into cohorts is. He also noted that the panelists seem to know that the applicants seek multiple grants and judge the applicants based on those facts. Commissioner Sonnenreich reiterated that we need to re-evaluate what the messages delivered to the panelists are. Commissioner Sonnenreich also emphasized that the commissioners should take a more active role in allocating the funds to the different grant programs to reflect the priorities of the Commission each year. Commissioner Fishman added that the Commission has just recently started to receive any form of the budget.

It was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Wohlfarth that the conversation be tabled.

\*Motion Carried                      Unanimous

**F. Current Policy:** Awards shows are currently eligible to be considered for funding through the City Arts Projects grant program, regardless of their level of accessibility to the public.

**Recommendation:** Awards shows that are not free and open to the public should not be eligible for funding.

Commissioner Sonnenreich commented that these types of applicants should have to show a strong public value.

It was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Wohlfarth that awards shows that are not significantly free and open to the public should not be eligible for funding.

\*Motion Carried                      5 in favor; 4 opposed; 1 abstension;

**G. Current Policy:** The financial and managerial capability score for the Cultural Facilities Program is weighted as 10% of the overall score and the artistic merit score is weighted at 30% of the overall score.

**Recommendation:** DCCAH should adjust the weighting in the evaluation criteria to give more weight (15%) to the financial and managerial capability of the applicant and less weight to artistic merit (25%).

It was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Fishman that the conversation be tabled in favor of a discussion amongst the policy and panel sub-committee.

\*Motion Carried                      Unanimous

The Chair asked that members of the Commission who are interested in sitting on the panel/policy committee sign up—they have a lot of work to do.

Commissioner Friedman addressed the issue of conflicts of interest. She reminded the commissioners that they must leave the room for discussion of and vote on grants related to any organization on whose board they sit. She added that we need a policy that relates to commissioners who actually operate organizations applying to the Commission. Commissioner Mpulubusi commented that no commissioner can receive a direct economic benefit from an organization securing grant funds.

The meeting went into Executive Session at 5:00 PM.

The Commission meeting recommenced at 5:05 PM. Commissioner Bowser asked when budget season starts and the Executive Director replied that that would be in February. He asked that the policy/panel sub-committee present some recommendations before the March Commission meeting so that they can be implemented contiguously with the FY 2011 budget scenario. The Chair asked for a good time for the committee to meet and asked them to figure it out. Commissioner Sonnenreich reiterated that there are two issues to be discussed: the weighting of evaluation criteria and the allocation of funding. Commissioner Wohlfarth asked that the Deputy Director, Ayris Scales, be invited to participate in the conversation.

It was moved by Commissioner Sonnenreich and seconded by Commissioner Friedman that the meeting adjourn at 5:10.